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History of Saint Vincent's
Parish



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HISTORY OF SAINT VINCENT'S PARISH

INTRODUCTION

INDIANA COLLECTION

TO relate the story of St. Vincent's Parish on this the glorious occasion of our Centenary Observance, is to tell a story of interest, not only to the members of the Congregation but to everyone who glories in the growth and the spread of Catholicity in this entire area. It is a story which takes one back almost to the very twilight of Catholic culture and organized Catholic life in this section known as the Upper Maumee Valley. Thus it necessarily also calls to mind the names of many of the saintly and heroic men who blazed the trails thru mud and wilderness to plant the Cross and to disperse the seeds of Faith in a new land: Names such as Baden, Benoit, Bessonies, Deschamps, Bottie and Greven. In a word, it is a story which tells of the early history of the Catholic Church in Allen County.

According to the brief historical sketches which happen to be available there were some evidences of Catholicity in this area as early as 1665. At that time a zealous pioneer priest in the person of Father Allouez came to labor among the Pottawotomies and the Miami Indians. Others too appeared on the scene periodically to administer to the needs of the Red Man and to offer the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass; among them quite possibly, famous Missionaries such as Marquette, LaSalle and Hennepin.

It was about the year 1830 however that there is evidence of missionary effort in the interests of the early white settlers. At that time Father S. Theadore Baden, Vicar General of the Diocese of Bardstown, and incidentally, the first priest to be ordained in the United States, visited Fort Miami (later Fort Wayne) and there offered Holy Mass and administered the Sacraments to the few scattered Catholics who then inhabited the area. The first Baptism of which there is any record, was administered by him on the occasion of this visit. Then came others in the persons of Father Picoh, Lalumiere, Ruff, Jeancoir and finally in 1836, Father Louis Mueller, the first resident pastor to be assigned to this territory.

In 1837, Father Mueller built St. Augustine's Church on the site of the present Cathedral Square, the first home of Catholic worship in the city of Fort Wayne. In 1840 Father Mueller was succeeded by Father Benoit around whom centers so much of the early history of the Catholic Church in this now flourishing portion of God's Vineyard.

While Fathers Benoit and Mueller frequently visited the early pioneers in the outlying sections such as Hesse Cassel as early as 1836 and Leo in 1838, there is every indication that the first church to be constructed in this entire region outside the city of Fort Wayne was the tiny Log Chapel built here at St. Vincent's in 1846. According to a pious tradition existing among the older members of the parish, this little Chapel stood on the East side of the Old Auburn Road in the center of what is now the entrance to the Sacred Heart Seminary. Actually, this seems to be clearly substantiated by a legal document which records the deeding of approximately one half acre of property to the parish, said parcel of land being described as follows:

"Starting from a point on the East side of the Fort Wayne and Auburn Road opposite the Southeast corner of the lot of the Church Chapel thence East to Bequeth Run, thence following the Run until it strikes said Fort Wayne and Auburn Road at a small bridge, thence South to the place of beginning, these premises comprising about one half acre of land". The Deed in question, a copy of which is in the possession of the parish is of real historical interest in so far as it records the granting of above-described parcel by one Francis Courant and others to Bishop Maurice de St. Palais, Bishop of Vincennes; and while the indenture was made as late as March 17, 1852, it establishes beyond a doubt that the first St. Vincent Church, which records otherwise indicate was constructed in the year 1846, stood on the property situated on the East side of the Old Auburn Road.

There is much importance to be attached to this deduction because it serves to indicate conclusively that there was another Log Chapel erected a few years later, not on the aforementioned site but on the West side of the Auburn Road in the vicinity of the present Cemetery Cross. Concerning this second chapel, some of the "Old Timers" have clear recollections at least from the standpoint of their having inherited some traditions with regard to it.

Altho there is no specific record as to who built either one of these Chapels, it is quite apparent that both had successively soon outlived their usefulness. The Parish was growing so rapidly that by the year 1861, the building of a rather substantial frame church was undertaken. It was this third church which then served the needs of the congregation until 1904 when the present building was erected.

ACTUAL BEGINNINGS

IN the year 1840, a number of French families immigrated from the Eastern part of France and settled approximately six miles North of the city of Fort Wayne. They called their community New France or North Gall. In 1843 Father Julian Benoit working from his headquarters at the Cathedral, began administering to these people in the capacity of a Visiting Pastor. For a period of three years he periodically offered the Holy Mass in the homes of the people of the community, notably in the home of one Isidore Pichon.

Mr. Pichon is also reverently remembered as the donor of the land which constitutes the present parish property marking the site of the present buildings and most of the area comprising the old cemetery. The headstone indicating Mr. Isidore Pichon's grave, is the oldest stone in the above mentioned cemetery, establishing the date of his death and burial as the year 1846. Altho the records are not available it is entirely possible that Mr. Pichon was among the very first to be interred in this hallowed spot, and quite likely too that Father Benoit officiated at his obsequies.



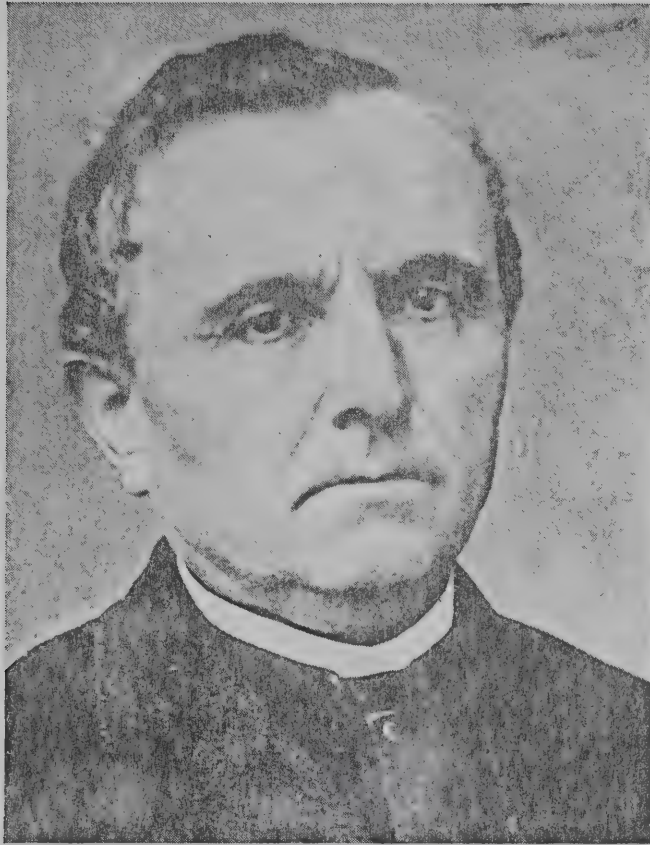
MR. ISIDORE PICHON'S GRAVE



FATHER JULIEN BENOIT
1843 - 1854

Since Father Julien Benoit is piously remembered as the Founder of St. Vincent Parish, it is only fitting and proper that we here honor his memory with a brief sketch of his truly apostolic life.

He was born in France in 1808. Very early in life he evidenced signs of a vocation and he began his studies as soon as circumstances would permit. When his preparations had been completed he was still too young to be ordained, and for a time then served in the capacity of a private tutor. In 1836 he came to America for the Diocese of Vincennes and on arriving at Baltimore remained for a while at St. Mary's Seminary and was ordained there in 1837. The first three years of his Priesthood were mainly spent in Southern Indiana, and then in the year 1840 he came to Fort Wayne. Here his labors among the early settlers and the Indians merited for him a reverence and esteem which rendered his work doubly fruitful and efficacious. Not only was he constantly solicitous about the care of those near at home but equally solicitous for the people of his scattered missions. Many a time he rode on horseback as far as Columbia City and Warsaw, to South Bend, to La Gro, Wabash and Decatur, to the French Settlements, far into Noble County and South even as far as Muncie. In 1857 when the Fort Wayne Diocese was established, Bishop Luers appointed him his Vicar General. After the death of Bishop Luers he was the Administrator of the Diocese. Bishop Dwenger again appointed him Vicar General and in 1883 was named a Domestic Prelate by His Holiness Pope Leo XIII. His death occurred on Dec. 26, 1886, thirty-two years after he left the parish which today so very gratefully remembers him as the Illustrious Priest who laid its foundation stones, and who for eleven years served its spiritual needs as its first Visiting Pastor.



FATHER A. BESSONIES

1854 - 1856

Father Bessonies was born in Alzac Province of Querry France, June 17, 1815. He was ordained a priest by Bishop de la Hailandiere at Vincennes, Indiana, in 1840. In 1854 he came to Fort Wayne and for two years was assigned to the Cathedral in the absence of Father Benoit. During this time, he was the visiting pastor here at St. Vincent's, and it was undoubtedly under his supervision or at least at his instigation that the original cottage or priest house was constructed. In 1855 Father Bessonies also interested himself in the Catholic families scattered around the town of Leo. He visited them and said Mass for them at least once a month, and soon succeeded in encouraging them to build a church. Altho he had no part in its erection, he had acquired the property marking its future site prior to his transfer from this community.

FATHER FRANCIS DESCHAMPS

1856 - 1858

It was Father Deschamps who came to St. Vincent's as the first resident pastor. Shortly after he had established himself here, he visited what was then known as Girardot Settlement (later on Ege) and is reputedly the first priest to have called on the nine families comprising that particular community. While pastor here, Father Deschamps also attended Leo as a Mission. He died after two active and fruitful years and was buried here in the Parish Cemetery. The new frame church which was built in 1861 stood directly over his grave, said grave being situated immediately in front of the sanctuary. According to an entry made in the burial records of the parish, a beautiful marble slab was laid in the floor of the church in 1892 marking the exact location of the grave. This slab contained the following inscription: "Here lies the Reverend Francis Deschamps a Priest and Pastor of St. Vincent's Church, who fifty years after birth, being conspicuous for his singular zeal and full of merit, died on the 19th day of August in the year of our Lord 1858, and lies buried in the sanctuary of this temple".

It is indeed regrettable that in the process of moving the above mentioned church and the building of the present structure, this marble slab disappeared, and as a consequence the exact location of Father Deschamps grave is no longer known to anyone. His memory is perpetuated however in the form of an inscription which was placed on the base of the stone altar supporting the large Crucifix which stands North of the present church and in the center of what is now the old cemetery.



THE FATHER DESCHAMPS MEMORIAL

FATHER ALEXIUS BOTTI

1858 - 1860

The second resident pastor was Father Botti. During the two years of his stay here, he also did considerable missionary work in the interests of twenty-three Catholic families who had settled in the town of New Haven. He was the first Priest to visit these people and during the year 1858 called on them regularly once a month for Divine Services, and also supervised the erection of their first Church. In 1860 he was transferred to Valparaiso with Hobart as a Mission. He died in 1872 and is buried in the Catholic Cemetery at Fort Wayne.

FATHER GREVIN

1860 - 1861

The pastorate of Father Grevin here at St. Vincent's was very brief. Nothing much is known about him except that he actually resided here and that during this time he regularly attended New Haven as a Mission. Sometime later he was assigned to Besancon as the first resident Pastor. Here he built the first Priest House at a cost of only a few hundred dollars.



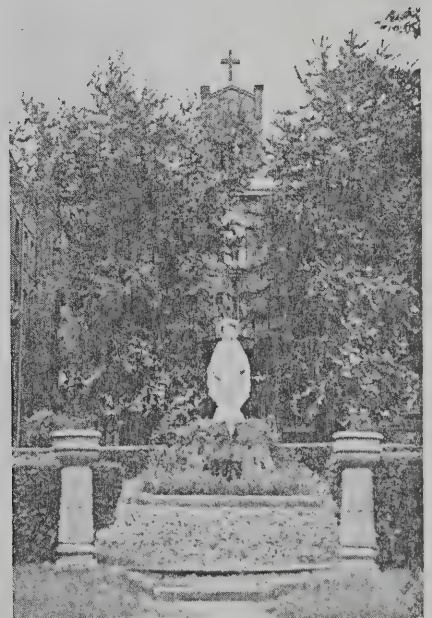
THE OLD ST. VINCENT CHURCH 1861



FATHER AUGUST ADAM 1861 - 1870



FATHER ADAM'S GRAVE



SACRED HEART ACADEMIE

CERTAINLY one of the most prominent among the pioneer pastors of the parish was the venerable and well-beloved Father Adam. In writing this history, the record would therefore be far from complete were it not to include a special sketch of his truly interesting life.

Father August Adam was born in France in the year 1832. After his ordination to the Priesthood he immigrated to America in the company of the well known Father Sorin of Notre Dame. It is sometimes argued as to whether he brought Father Sorin or Sorin brought Adam but the argument seems to be in favor of Adam because he was seemingly the one who had the means required to make the trip.

Shortly after his appointment as Pastor of St. Vincent's in 1861 he assumed the role of builder. His first venture was the new parish church. The congregation had now grown to eighty families and the little Log Chapel was no longer adequate. This third structure, erected by Father Adam was a frame building for which the lumber and labor was almost entirely donated by the parishioners. As a consequence the entire project was completed at a cost of approximately \$1,500.00. This church was dedicated on the feast of All Saints in 1861.

In 1866 Father Adam founded and erected the Academie of our Lady of the Sacred Heart, one of the pioneer Catholic educational institutions for young ladies in the middle West. This School located just a short distance East of the church property was placed in charge of the Sisters of Holy Cross under whose able direction the institution prospered for many years. This property has since come into the possession of the Crosier Fathers who are most successfully conducting a Diocesan Seminary for students to the Holy Priesthood.

In 1868 Father Adam also supervised the erection of a new parochial residence thus completing the local building program which he had undertaken some years earlier. He then remained as pastor of the parish and chaplain to the Academie until 1870 when he was transferred to Besancon where he also raised funds and erected a new church.

In 1875 he received permission from Bishop Dwenger to return to France. He then served two years as a chaplain in the French Navy after which the Bishop of Tours assigned him to a very desirable parish in Paris. Here he remained until 1905 when he begged his Bishop for permission to return to the United States and spend his remaining days with the Trappist Community at Gethsemanae, Ky. Since he was too aged however to withstand the rigorous demands of the Trappist Rule he returned to Fort Wayne and was readmitted to the Diocese. After serving for a time as Chaplain to the Sisters of St. Joseph at Tipton, Bishop Alerding honored his request and allowed him to return as Chaplain to the Academie of the Sacred Heart. Here he spent the remainder of his days except for two years absence on another and final visit to France. On March 31, 1917 he was called to his reward. His remains lie buried here beneath the Cross of the Old Parish Cemetery.

In the year 1870 after Father Adam's departure, the parish was placed in charge of the Holy Cross Fathers of Notre Dame, not in the sense of it becoming one of their Missions, but rather from the standpoint of their being invited to thus serve the Diocese in the capacity of French-speaking priests.

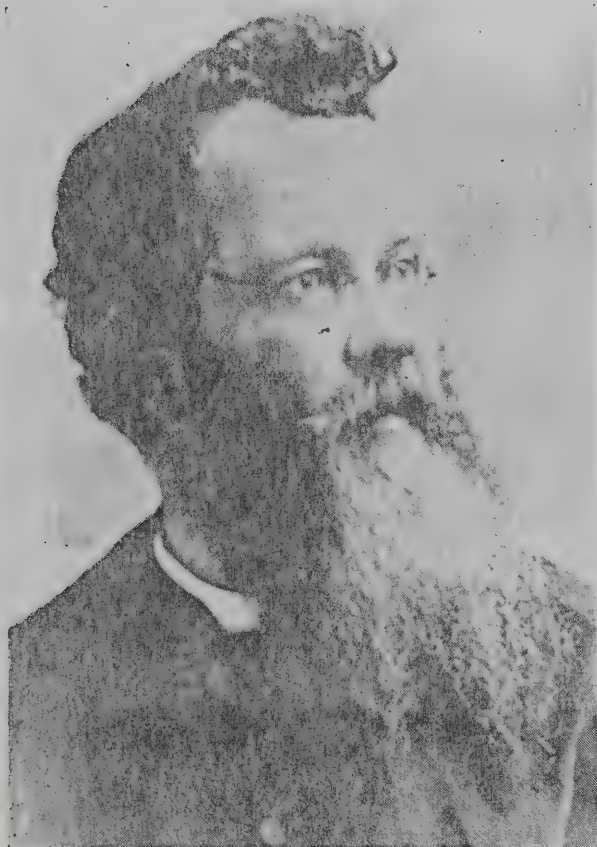
From the time of its inception, St. Vincent parish was comprised chiefly of French immigrants and consequently required the services of a priest who was capable of speaking their language. In 1870 therefore when Bishop Luers found that he had no diocesan priests whom he could send to replace Father Adams, appealed to the Holy Cross Fathers to assist in the solution of the problem. This they did most generously, and thus began an arrangement which was to perdure for nearly thirty years.

The circumstances which found the Holy Cross Sisters in charge of Sacred Heart Academie, undoubtedly helped to make this arrangement a doubly pleasing and satisfactory one for those who were sent to administer to the needs of the parish. In the order of their succession, they were:

Father Julius Frere	1870 - 1873
Father W. Demers	1873
Father Constantine Maujay	1873 - 1875
Father C. Wardy	1875 - 1878
Father Bonnet Roche	1878 - 1888
Father J. Franciscus	1888
Father J. Lauth	1888 - 1890
Father J. M. Toohey	1890 - 1895
Father Jacob Lauth	1895
Father E. Amand	1895 - 1897

FATHER BONNET ROCHE

1878 - 1888



FATHER J. M. TOOHEY

1890 - 1895



FATHER ALBERT LAFONTAINE

1897 - 1901

The first diocesan priest to be assigned to the parish after the many years of incumbancy by the Holy Cross Fathers, was Father Lafontaine. Born in Canada in the city of Montreal, he took his theology course in Genoa, Italy, and was ordained there in 1892. He then returned to Canada where he labored fruitfully for some years. In 1896 he was received into the Diocese of Fort Wayne. After serving as Assistant at the Cathedral for about a year, he was appointed pastor of St. Vincent's. In 1901 Bishop Alerding named him the first Diocesan School Superintendent. He died Nov. 15, 1928.

Among the various record books of the parish which have been preserved back thru the years, there is one which contains a particularly interesting entry. This entry was made by Father Lafontaine in the year 1900 and not only indicates that the parish then consisted of seventy families comprising 295 souls, but also lists the names of all family heads. Incidentally, the name of Henry Bercot is the only one remaining on our membership roster today. Because we regard this list as a real historical document, we herewith proudly transcribe the same.



FATHER MICHAEL P. LOUEN 1901 - 1907

IN the year 1901, Father Lafontaine was succeeded by Father Michael P. Louen, who in the course of his pastorate here was destined to become the builder of the present beautiful parish church, and who because of this notable contribution to the cause of Catholicity in this community is still remembered and spoken of at this late date, with special reverence.

Father Louen was born in Chicago in 1870. Having made both his classical and philosophical studies in France, he was admirably fitted for the task of administering to the needs of the people of this New France, here at Academie. He studied Theology at St. Francis Seminary, Milwaukee, and was ordained by Archbishop Katzer in 1899.

Prior to his coming he served as Assistant at St. Joseph's, Mishawaka, and then for a short time as temporary pastor at St. Mary's, Huntington. During the first three years of his pastorate here, he succeeded in accumulating sufficient funds to warrant the inauguration of a building program. The little frame church build by Father Adam was becoming quite inadequate for the growing congregation and early in the year 1904 was moved from its foundations to make way for a larger and more modern building.

This structure of brick and stone composition was built at the cost of \$11,970.00; and while this sum undoubtedly represented a huge investment then, it would perhaps require approximately \$75,000.00 to replace it today. The architect for the building was C. R. Weatherhogg, the general contractor, John Sultzer. The general spirit of enthusiasm and good will on the part of all concerned with regard to this project is attested to by the fact that the parish subscribed about \$4,000.00. The records also indicate that a total of nineteen donors furnished the stained glass windows at a cost of \$600.00, and that the statues on the side altars were purchased by the pupils of Sacred Heart Academie. At the end of the year 1905 the total indebtedness was only \$1,400.00.

It may be of special interest to note that some misfortune attended the construction of the present church. It came in the nature of a furious storm about the time that the timbers for the roof were being put in place. Tradition has it that these timbers were completely torn from their moorings. As a result the top portion of the walls was considerably weakened. While this condition wasn't apparent at the time, it showed up in less than a year when a decided wall spread appeared. The threat of danger was immediately eliminated however thru the process of tie-rodning and altho the building was never completely drawn back into place these reinforcements have to all indications admirably served the purpose of sustaining the heavy slate roof and holding the structure together. The installation of these rods accounts for the rather unique ceiling in evidence in the church. The boxings placed at intervals in the ceiling conceal these iron rods.

Father Louen was transferred to Besancon in the year 1907. Here he built a new school and Sisters' House. In 1915 he was sent to St. Peter and Paul's, Huntington, where he also built a new school. In 1929 he was appointed to St. Joseph's, Mishawaka, where he had begun his priestly career. He died shortly afterwards on May 19, 1931.

From Jan. 12, 1907 until July 1, 1908, St. Vincent's Parish was under the administration of a Precious Blood priest in the person of Father Ambrose Dowd.



FATHER JOSEPH LYNN

1908 - 1921

Of all of the many priests who served the parish either as pastors or administrators, perhaps none served any more faithfully, and certainly none nearly as long as did Father Lynn who was in residence here for thirteen years.

Father Lynn was born in County Tirone, Ireland. When still a child he came to America to make his home with relatives in Whiting, Indiana. He studied for the priesthood at Kankakee, Ill., and Cincinnati, Ohio, and was ordained by Bishop Alerding in 1905. After three years of Assistantship at St. Mary's, Lafayette, and St. Charles', Peru, he came to St. Vincent's in 1908 to begin his long term of fruitful service, not only to the people of this community but also to the Sisters and pupils of Sacred Heart Academy.

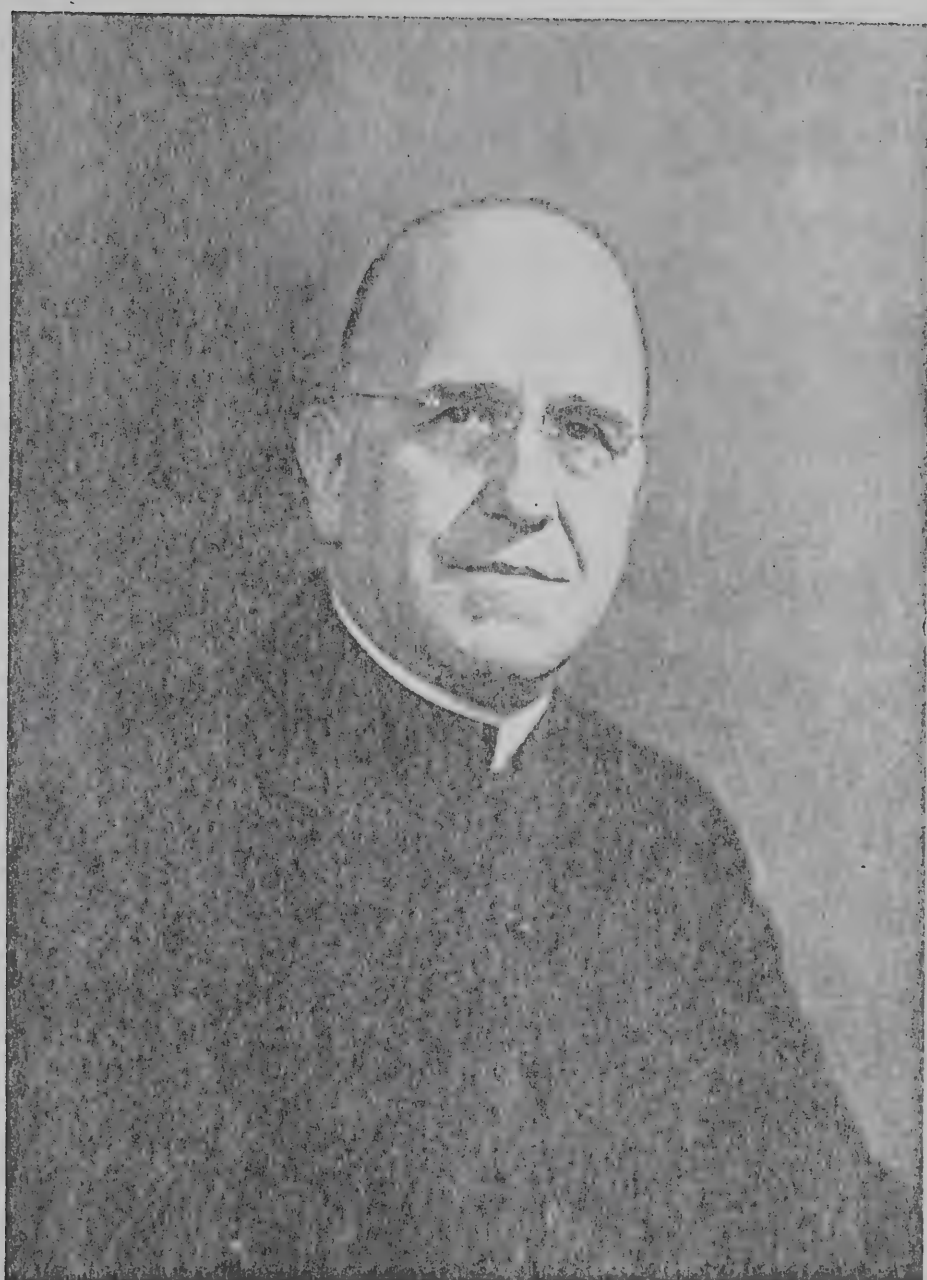
From the days of Father Adam up to the time that the Academie was closed, the pastors of the parish always filled the Chaplaincy at the local institution. While this additional responsibility must have in some respects weighed quite heavily on the shoulders of all concerned it can be safely said that Father Lynn truly endeared himself as much to this portion of his flock as he did to his parishioners, by reason of the devoted service which he constantly rendered to them.

Because of his progressive spirit and his ability to get things done he made many splendid contributions to the parish plant. In 1909 he erected the present rectory at a cost of \$4,000.00. In 1911 he installed the steam heating system in the church. By 1915 he had completely liquidated the parish debt. In 1916, he purchased the present pews, the stations of the Cross, the organ and the side altars. With regard to the organ, costing approximately \$1,500.00, the sum of \$742.00 was solicited in terms of a donation from the Carnegie Foundation and the remainder raised by popular subscription. In 1917 he installed a new Prox boiler in the Church, and in 1918 built the Annex connecting the rectory with the church. This annex now proves almost invaluable from the standpoint of a Winter Chapel for week-day Mass.

In June 1921, Father Lynn was transferred to Hobart where he remained until 1925. He then went to California for a time. There he built a church and school in the city of San Diego. In 1929 he returned to the Diocese. Since then he has held pastorates in Whiting and Michigan City. While in Michigan City he also built a school and rectory. He is now stationed in Dunkirk in the new Diocese of Lafayette.



CEMETERY ALTAR ERECTED BY FR. LYNN 1920



THE RT. REV. EDWARD VURPILLAT 1921 - 1926

In June 1921, Father Edward Vurpillat was appointed to succeed Father Lynn. He too is prayerfully remembered by the people of the parish for an outstanding accomplishment, for it was during his regime that a basement was provided for under the church building

Father Vurpillat was born in Winamac, Indiana, in 1884. He studied at St. Joseph College, Rensselaer, Indiana, and at St. Bernard's, Rochester, N. Y. He was ordained by Bishop Alerding in 1911. After spending six years as Assistant at St. Mary's, Lafayette, and St. Peter's, Fort Wayne, he became pastor of Portland. This assignment was a very brief one however because in 1918 he asked permission to apply for military duty. The permission was granted and he was accepted as a Chaplain in the United States Army. In this capacity he was sent to Europe and saw action in France. He then returned to America after the war and in 1919 was made pastor of St. Joseph Church in Fort Wayne. In 1921 he came to Academie where like his predecessors he also served as chaplain to the Académie.

During the Summer of 1924 the difficult task of excavating the Church basement was undertaken. To tell the complete story of this program would require much time and space for it was a program which not only demanded a great deal of courage but also persevering cooperation on the part of many loyal hearts and willing hands. It was a project which was accomplished almost entirely by volunteer labor. Father Vurpillat supplied the guidance and inspiration; the men of the parish working under his supervision, moved the dirt. They not only unearthed old graves, but also encountered real hazards in the form of quicksand pockets. In one instance particularly, it seemed that the whole venture was going to end in failure and perhaps even disaster since there was a definite threat of the entire South wall caving in. Fortunately this didn't happen but it was undoubtedly the deciding factor with regard to the installation of unusually large retaining walls. These walls it is true considerably diminish the capacity of the hall and yet it is perhaps because of them that the building still stands today.

All thru these years, the parish has thus been able to boast of a splendid meeting place and social center, thanks to the courage of a pastor who truly appreciated the need of such facilities. Within recent years the basement has been improved and modernized and now presents a truly inviting atmosphere and setting for most any kind of an activity.

In 1927, Father Vurpillat was transferred to East Chicago and since 1935 has been stationed at St. Mary's Church, Michigan City. He is now also the local Dean and bears the title of a Rt. Rev. Monsignor.



FATHER JOHN E. DILLON 1927 - 1932

When Father Vurpillat was transferred in March of 1927, the next pastor to be assigned to St. Vincent's was the Diocesan Chancellor in the person of Father John E. Dillon.

Father Dillon was born in Hartford City in 1891. He made his studies at Niagara University and St. Mary's, Cincinnati, and was ordained at Cincinnati in 1917. Immediately after ordination Bishop Alerding selected him as his personal secretary. This in turn led to his appointment as Chancellor in 1921, an office which he retained throughout the five years of his pastorate here and therefore up to the time of his appointment as pastor of St. Ann's Church in Lafayette in 1932.

The name of Father Dillon is in a very special way associated with St. Vincent's parish church since it was during his pastorate in 1929 that the interior of the building was completely renovated. Not only did the project include a thorough program of decoration but the altars too were reduced and made to conform to exacting liturgical standards. The paintings and decorations were executed by the Conrad Schmidt Studios at a cost of \$4,100.00, and while the parish thus incurred a new indebtedness of \$5,000.00 at this time, the work was durable and lasting, and for nearly twenty years now has been a source of satisfaction, inspiration and devotion to the members of the congregation. Even today there is very little deterioration in evidence, and together with the many appointments which have been added from time to time, the Church interior truly presents an appearance of loveliness, and can perhaps be regarded as one of the most beautiful rural structures in the Diocese.



ST. VINCENT DE PAUL CHURCH INTERIOR



FATHER JOACHIM BAKER 1932 - 1934

One of the oldest priests to actively assume charge of St. Vincent's parish was Father Joachim Baker. He was appointed to succeed Father Dillon in 1932. After two years he was transferred to Hesse Cassel his last in a long line of pastoral appointments. While at Hesse Cassel he enjoyed the happy privilege of celebrating the Golden Jubilee of his ordination to the priesthood. He observed the event in St. Mary's Church, Fort Wayne, where fifty years previously he had celebrated his First Holy Mass.

Father Baker was a native of Fort Wayne, born in 1863. He studied at Mount Calvary and St. Francis, Wis., and was ordained by Bishop Dwenger in 1888. The two years of his pastorate here were rather difficult and trying years because they were depression years, and the records indicate his having a hard time making ends meet. Because of his patient and self-sacrificing spirit however, he did succeed perhaps as well as anyone else could have under the circumstances. Father Baker passed to his reward Jan. 20, 1939.



FATHER EDWARD FALLON 1934 - 1936

While Father Fallon remained here only a short time, he admirably proved his ability as an administrator. Conditions generally were still bad as a result of the financial depression, and yet the records indicate that he not only succeeded in liquidating all delinquent obligations but even paid off a small portion of the parish debt. These achievements like so many others that had been realized in the past, were in a large measure the result of the traditional and successful parish picnics held almost annually back thru the years.

Father Fallon was born in Huntington in 1894. He was ordained in 1920 by Bishop Alerding and was sent to St. Patrick's, Fort Wayne, for his first assignment. He then successively served at St. Vincent's Logansport, St. Vincent's Orphanage, Fort Wayne and Portland. When he left here in 1936 he went to Reynolds and has since been assigned to Kentland, now also in the new Diocese of Lafayette.



FATHER CHARLES KEYSER 1936 - 1940

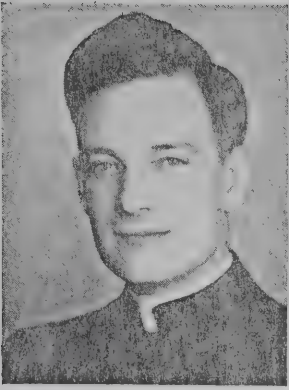
Not only have the people of St. Vincent's always been loyal and true to their priests, but they also have a habit of reverently remembering and speaking well of them after they are gone. Certainly this spirit has always and perhaps particularly been in evidence as it concerns Father Charles Keyser who was appointed here in 1936 to succeed Father Fallon. Father Keyser was born in Monroe, Michigan, in 1875. He studied for the Priesthood at Notre Dame, Sandwich, Canada and Cincinnati, Ohio. He was ordained by Bishop Alerding in 1902. After serving as Assistant in Elkhart and Hammond, he was made Pastor of Lowell. In less than a year he was sent to North Judson where he built the present beautiful church. From 1907 on he served under the Bishop of Crookston, Minnesota, and then in 1936 returned to his own Diocese of Fort Wayne.

As the Pastor of St. Vincent's, Father Keyser endeared himself to the hearts of the people both by reason of his thoroughly spiritual approach as it concerned the solution of their problems, and secondly by reason of his self-sacrificing spirit. Thus even tho general economic conditions had not as yet improved to any extent during the period of his stay here he nevertheless succeeded in making a fine showing during those five years. Besides some improvements and many necessary purchases, he managed to retire \$3,200.00 of the parish indebtedness.

It is also of interest to note here that Father Keyser served as the last of a long line of Chaplains to the Holy Cross Sisters at the Academie. While the institution had ceased to function as a school already before his coming here, it now served as a home for infirm and retired Sisters. In 1938 the property was purchased by the Crosier Fathers, and has since been converted into a Diocesan Minor Seminary for students to the Holy Priesthood. This program since its inception has been under the very able direction of the Very Rev. Thomas Brandon, O. S. C., Prior and Rector.



THE VERY REV. THOMAS BRANDON, O. S. C.

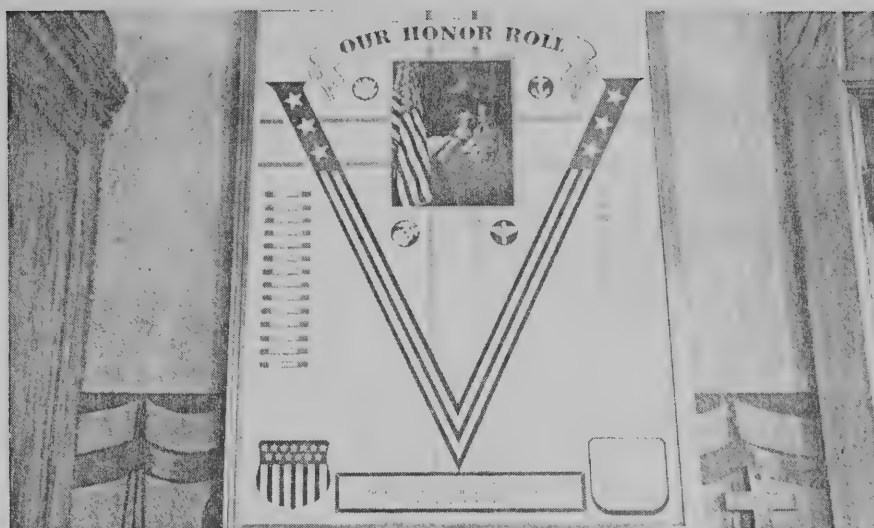


FATHER EDWARD A. MILLER 1940



It is entirely possible that Father Keyser would still be the Pastor of St. Vincent's Parish had it not been for the particular circumstance which resulted in Father Miller being appointed his successor on July 4, 1940. This circumstance had to do with Father Miller's Directorship of the Music Department at Central Catholic High School in Fort Wayne. While the prospect of his receiving a pastoral appointment at this time was exceedingly welcome the desire to continue working at the school was almost equally strong, so good Bishop Noll solved the difficulty by creating an opening here at Academie within easy driving distance to the city, and making Father Keyser the Pastor of Avilla. Father Miller cheerfully accepted the double responsibility and continued to serve in this dual capacity until June, 1944 when a Professional Band Director in the person of Mr. Richard Guthier was selected to replace him.

Father Miller was born in 1905 at Waterloo, Indiana. He studied for the Priesthood at Mount Calvary, Wis., and Cincinnati, Ohio, and was ordained by Bishop Noll in 1929. His first assignment was to Michigan City where he served as Resident Chaplain at St. Anthony Hospital, Catholic Chaplain of the Indiana State Prison and Assistant at St. Mary's Church. In 1935 he was transferred to St. Mary's Church, Fort Wayne. Here he built up a splendid Catholic Youth Organization. In 1939 while still continuing as Assistant at St. Mary's, he was named the Spiritual Director at Central Catholic High School. Functioning in this capacity he at the same time organized Band and Orchestra and generally speaking laid the groundwork for an outstanding Music Department in the School. In 1940 he was named the 26th Pastor of St. Vincent's Parish.



IN THE SERVICE OF THEIR COUNTRY WORLD WAR II

John Pequignot

Justin Smith

Merlin Fough

Gerry Pequignot

Vincent Hartnett

Joseph Thompson

James Pulver

Robert Remke

Eugene Bohlke

Wyonald Hoot

James Poinsatte

*Joseph Ryan

Robert Bobay

Earl Smith

Frank Till

James Till

James Oddou

Paul Partee

*Stephen O'Rourke

Paul Maloney

Robert Gillieron

Robert Burns

Robert Darling

Henry Siefer

John Ryan

Ralph Maloney

Harold Oddou

Richard Pratt

Leland Richardson

Frank Fisher

*William Ryan

Harry Pulver

Vincent Peck

Richard Roy

Herman Till

John Groselle

Tom Partee

OUR BOYS WHO DIED IN THE SERVICE OF THEIR COUNTRY



JOSEPH J. RYAN



STEPHEN O'ROURKE



WILLIAM F. RYAN

PVT. JOSEPH RYAN: age 30, the son of Mr. and Mrs. John Ryan, and husband of Mrs. Doris Ryan of Huntertown, Indiana, was killed in action in France on July 21, 1944. He served in the Army for nine months as a member of an Infantry Unit. He was sent overseas on May, 1944.

PVT. STEPHEN O'ROURKE: the son of Mr. and Mrs. William S. O'Rourke of Riverwood, St. Joe Rd., was killed in action in Luxembourg on January 8, 1945. During his two years in the Army, he first served as a Chaplain's Assistant and was then transferred to an Infantry Unit. He participated in active combat for eight days before he met his death.

PVT. WILLIAM RYAN: another son of Mr. and Mrs. John Ryan of Huntertown, Indiana, was a member of the United States Marine Corps. He entered the service on January 28, 1944 and was killed in action on Iwo Jima, March 8, 1945.



ETERNAL REST, GRANT UNTO THEM, O LORD

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